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Indigenous Australians in the National Tourism Strategy: impact, sustainability and policy issues

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SERIES NOTE

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- investigate the stimulation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development and issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and unemployment;
- identify and analyse the factors affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the labour force; and
- assist in the development of government strategies aimed at raising the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the labour market.

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ABSTRACT

The key aim of this paper is to inject a degree of policy and economic realism into discussions about Aboriginal involvement in tourism. There is a growing policy impetus for an increased Aboriginal participation in tourism. From a macro-policy perspective, this is linked to a perception that 'Aboriginality' is one element that makes Australia a unique tourist destination and that an increased Aboriginal participation will result in greater potential for marketing the distinctiveness of the Australian experience. There is also growing pressure, especially during the current recession, to find employment niches under the Commonwealth Government's Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP).

This paper sets out to canvass a number of paradoxes, dilemmas and issues that are faced by both the tourism industry and Aboriginal people. It begins by making a brief assessment of and providing new data on the demand for, and supply of, Aboriginal cultures as a tourism attraction. Next, a range of impact and sustainability issues are outlined. This is followed by a discussion of policy considerations for the future.

To be effective, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy will need to be policy realistic. An important element of such realism is that the varied options for Aboriginal industry participation should be carefully considered, rigorously evaluated and slowly nurtured; tourism will not provide an instant panacea for Aboriginal economic disadvantage. Significant industry participation might only occur in the medium- to longer-term, after product development, testing and marketing. Such a gradual approach might prove unpopular with policy-makers, but it is essential if sustainable Aboriginal involvement in tourism is to occur.

Acknowledgements

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The key aim of this paper is to inject a degree of policy and economic realism into discussions about Aboriginal involvement in tourism.[1] There is a growing policy impetus for an increased Aboriginal participation in the tourism sector that is predicted to grow rapidly in the next decade. From a macro-perspective, this policy interest is linked to a perception that 'Aboriginality' is one element that makes Australia a unique tourist destination and that an increased Aboriginal participation will result in greater potential for marketing the distinctiveness of the Australian experience. There is also growing pressure, especially during the current recession, to find employment niches for Aboriginal people under the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) (Australian Government 1987). The AEDP was launched in 1987 and has a stated goal of employment equality between Aboriginal and other Australians. Tourism has long been asserted to be a potential source of employment for Aboriginal people, especially in rural and remote regions, where they are assumed to have both comparative and locational advantage in the provision of tourism services and elements of Aboriginal cultures. With tourism expenditure in Australia estimated at $25 billion in 1990-91, generating 448,600 jobs and contributing 5.4 per cent to Gross Domestic Product, it is not surprising that those representing Aboriginal interests find this sector particularly attractive.

The National Tourism Strategy was launched in June 1992. At almost the same time, the Australian Government announced its second stage response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Commonwealth of Australia 1991). Included in a package of policies and programs to stimulate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander socioeconomic wellbeing was a specific focus on a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy. The proposal to develop this interagency strategy by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the new Department of Tourism (DOT) seeks to take advantage of considerable, as yet undeveloped, potential for Aboriginal people in tourism. In press releases at the time, the Ministers for Tourism and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs both emphasised that the National Tourism Strategy would seek to foster the economic development of unique Australian cultural attractions, such as those provided by Aboriginal people.[2] The evolving relationship between these two Commonwealth agencies is currently seeing cooperation in the development of the strategy. These recent initiatives are the culmination of a number of reports that have identified the tourism industry as a potentially important arena for greater Aboriginal involvement.[3]

These macro-policy calls for greater Aboriginal involvement in the industry date back to the first comprehensive study of the Australian tourism industry in 1965 (Harris, Kerr, Forster and Co. 1965). In the last

twenty-seven years, Aboriginal participation in tourism has been sporadic, small-scale and largely indirect. The underlying assumption in discussions about Aboriginal involvement in tourism is that the 'Aboriginal product' is either an important, or a potentially important, cultural attraction for both international and domestic tourists. However, there has been very little effort to empirically validate such demand-side assertions. Nor is it clear whether projections of tourism growth are sensitive to the level of Aboriginal participation in the industry. Simultaneously, there has been an implicit assumption that there are Aboriginal individuals and groups, in all their diversity, throughout Australia, that have a product to supply to the industry. Again there has been limited effort to empirically validate this. At most, there are a few case studies, mainly by academics, of Aboriginal involvement in the industry.

This paper canvasses a number of paradoxes, dilemmas and issues that are faced by both the tourism industry and Aboriginal people. While issues of economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of tourism on communities, often summed up by the currently popular term 'ecologically sustainable tourism', are largely regarded as issues of the 1990s, the potential negative impacts of tourism on Aboriginal communities have long been recognised. The focus here is primarily on the Northern Territory (NT) experience. This is influenced by a number of factors. First, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission (NTTC) has made the most concerted effort to incorporate Aboriginal elements into its tourism strategy; an Aboriginal liaison section of the Commission was established in 1984. This effort is partly due to the significance of the Aboriginal proportion of the NT population (22 per cent) and Aboriginal ownership and co-management of some key tourist destinations like Uluru, Kakadu, Nitmiluk and Gurig National Parks. Second, the NT situation is instructive because the NTTC has attempted to use its unique Aboriginal comparative advantage to encourage both domestic and international tourism in much the same way as the National Tourism Strategy is now proposing for Australia as a whole. Third, the NT encapsulates the full diversity of Aboriginal involvement in tourism. Finally, most research and available longer-term statistics on Aboriginal involvement in tourism are limited to this region; most of my own tourism research has been in the NT.

The paper begins by making a brief assessment of the demand for, and supply of, Aboriginal cultures as a tourism attraction. Next, a range of impact and sustainability issues are outlined, primarily highlighting Aboriginal interests and concerns. This is followed by a discussion of some policy considerations, before a concluding prognostic section.

Aboriginal cultures as a tourism attraction: the demand side

The proposition that Aboriginal cultures have a positive role in marketing Australia as an international tourist destination has inherent appeal. However, the evidence available to support this proposition is far from conclusive. The National Tourism Strategy, while noting that indigenous cultures are an integral part of Australia's national heritage, only suggests that they offer tourism 'potential' (DOT 1992: 81). A study commonly used to support this view was conducted by the Australia Council (Spring 1990). This study, which surveyed international visitors already in Australia, was only conducted during one month and then factored up, and focused specifically on international visitor interest in Aboriginal arts. The study found that 49 per cent of international visitors surveyed were interested in seeing and learning about Aboriginal art and culture; 23 per cent were 'very interested', while 26 per cent were 'fairly interested' (Spring 1990: 2).

This finding can be juxtaposed against the only available longer-term comprehensive data collected by the NTTC over the past five years; these are briefly summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Aboriginal culture as main attraction for holiday/recreation groups using commercial accommodation, 1987-88 to 1991-92.[a]

Year	Origin of tourists			
	Northern Territory	Interstate	Overseas	Total
1987-88	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2
1988-89	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1
1989-90	0.0	0.4	0.6	0.4
1990-91	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.3
1991-92	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.6

a. These data are subject to large sampling errors because of small sample size and should be used with caution. For example, the standard error for 1991-92 data at 95 per cent confidence interval is 0.62 +/- 1.04. These figures reflect the response to the question: What was the particular feature that was most important in attracting you to the NT?

Source: Compiled by Magda Sexton, NT Tourist Commission from various NT Travel Monitors.

These data, from various issues of the NT Travel Monitor, indicate that Aboriginal culture has not been a significant 'main attraction' for

holiday/recreation groups using commercial accommodation in the NT. Not only is the figure relatively insignificant (consistently less than 1 per cent), but it converts to very few actual tourist numbers: in 1989-90, for example, the NTTC estimated that Aboriginal culture was the main interest for only 711 visitors and an 'other' interest for 1,881 more. Furthermore, there is no clear positive trend that can be established, given the high degree of sampling error. The figures do need to be strongly qualified though, as it is not clear at what point during the visit tourists were surveyed. It is possible that even though tourists came to the NT for other main attractions, Aboriginal culture became an attraction during their stay.

There has been little attempt, to date, to undertake market research to segment the demand for Aboriginal tourism into various categories. Such findings have encouraged the NTTC to judge that it is primarily special interest groups, rather than the mass tourism segment, that has an interest in Aboriginal cultures.[4] Consequently, the NTTC has altered its marketing strategy in recent years to target special interest 'niche' groups with the 'Put Yourself in Aboriginal Hands' and 'Come Share Our Culture' campaigns. The relative success of this new approach indicates that an accurate niche marketing assessment has been made.

Aboriginal involvement in tourism: the supply side

The supply side of Aboriginal involvement in tourism has been as imprecisely assessed as the demand side. Much of the focus to date has been on distinct forms of Aboriginal involvement in tourism rather than on Aboriginal involvement in mainstream tourism service provision. The reason for this is that the inter-industry nature of the provision of goods and services to tourists makes an assessment of the contribution of particular ethnic groups extremely difficult; there is no simple means of estimating the Aboriginal component of the industry.[5] The major forms of Aboriginal involvement in tourism both in Australia and the NT can be simplified into five broad categories, some of which overlap. These include the following in order of significance:

i The manufacture and sale of Aboriginal art and material culture. In 1987-88, 4,838 practicing Aboriginal artists were enumerated in Australia, with 52 per cent located in the NT (Altman 1989a: 34). While there are no exact figures available, it has been estimated that international visitors account for 45 per cent of industry sales Australia-wide (ibid.: 91). A crucial feature of such involvement for Aboriginal people is that it is indirect and generally requires little interaction with tourists. It is likely that mass tourism provides a potential market for Aboriginal souvenirs and artefacts.

ii A range of Aboriginal-run small-scale enterprises operate in the NT. These vary from Aboriginal arts and crafts wholesale and retail outlets (many of which are community-based) to Aboriginal-owned and -operated stores or caravan parks that service tourists, and small-scale dance troupes that perform generally on a seasonal basis. Some of these enterprises provide what could be referred to as a mainstream service (like road-house facilities), while others provide a distinct Aboriginal product.

iii A particular type of Aboriginal enterprise is the cultural tour. These emphasise particular elements of Aboriginal life: some focus on hunting and gathering, others on rock art or Aboriginal religious interpretations of the landscape, some on animal and bird watching and some on a combination of all these. A feature of such tours is that they often last several days, involve direct interaction between Aboriginal people and visitors, and frequently allow visitors access to normally restricted Aboriginal-owned land. Such cultural tours are invariably small-scale, can be infrequent, owing to a limited host capacity to undertake such work full-time, and can be influenced by seasonality. They are frequently collaborative, involving non-Aboriginal management and service provision.

iv There have been recent proposals for the establishment of Aboriginal cultural centres. A number exist in various parts of Australia, but to date the only Aboriginal-controlled cultural centre in the NT has been the craft camp operated by Maruku Arts and Crafts at Uluru National Park (Central Land Council et al. 1991). This situation is about to change, with firm proposals to construct cultural centres at Kakadu and Uluru National Parks and other possibilities in Katherine and Nitmiluk National Park, and near Darwin.

v A final form of Aboriginal involvement in tourism is as investors. This is evident at localities like Kakadu National Park and Kings Canyon (Watarrka) National Park where Aboriginal interests have invested in large-scale (by regional standards) tourism infrastructure development like hotels and motels. Such investment can be indirect (requiring no Aboriginal involvement with tourists), or it might provide opportunities for direct contact via concessionary tour enterprises or employment of service staff.

It is again instructive to correlate this range of involvement with recent information on Aboriginal cultural attractions that feature as activities and interests for tourists surveyed in the NT. Table 2 provides two broad findings. First, there is a consistent higher utilisation of indirect elements of Aboriginal culture by all visitors to the NT. Passive museums and displays rank above potentially more active sales of artefacts and

definitely more 'direct contact' corroborees and bush tours. It is unclear to what extent these trends are dictated by demand-side factors, supply-side constraints or ineffective marketing that is failing to match demand and supply. Second, there is a consistently greater interest in Aboriginal culture from overseas visitors, a finding replicated with less statistical certainty in Table 1.

Table 2. Elements of Aboriginal culture that feature as main activities and interests of non-business visitors holidaying in the commercial accommodation sector, NT, 1991-92.

Aboriginal culture	Origin of tourists			
	Northern Territory	Interstate	Overseas	Total
Visits to museums/ displays	8.0	23.1	30.6	23.7
Purchase craft/ artifacts	3.8	15.5	23.1	16.8
Corroborees/ bush tours	0.9	5.5	16.4	9.3
Other	1.1	1.3	1.9	1.5
No interest	86.2	54.7	28.1	48.8

Source: *Northern Territory Travel Monitor 1991-92*, Kinhill, Cameron, McNamara for the NT Tourist Commission, November 1992.

It emerges from this very brief overview that there is little aggregate information about the supply side of the Aboriginal tourism industry. Some promotional material exists in the NT, but this is limited to a small number of cultural tours. There is no accurate database on Aboriginal tourism options throughout Australia nor on the capacity of available options to absorb large numbers of visitors, especially during seasonal peaks. To date, the limited supply of the Aboriginal product has been highly dependent on marketing by the NTTC and considerable external management input. There is some concern that with the implementation of a recommendation in the Kennedy Report (1992) to close NT Tourist Bureaus, Aboriginal cultural tourism will suffer disproportionately owing to its greater reliance on external marketing services. As with the demand side, there has been limited market research to segment the supply side into various forms of Aboriginal involvement in the industry. If, as most available evidence suggests, Aboriginal involvement in the industry is small-scale, embryonic and highly vulnerable, then what are the factors that have limited the expansion of this segment of the industry? And what options are there for Aboriginal involvement in the industry?

Impact and sustainability issues

A growing literature in Australia is examining impact and sustainability issues as they relate to Aboriginal tourism. These studies and reports will not be discussed at length here, but some fundamental and somewhat stylised issues are highlighted.[6] The issues raised here are indicative rather than exhaustive.

Impact issues

It is widely recognised that while tourism can generate positive economic benefits, there are actual and potential associated environmental, social and cultural costs (and benefits). The focus here is on cultural impacts. However, such a focus is somewhat artificial: from an Aboriginal perspective, cultural impacts can rarely be neatly separated from economic, social and environmental impacts. Furthermore, this focus is somewhat speculative as there has been little quantitative evaluation of non-economic impacts.

As an illustrative example, one might examine the interrelated nature of impacts of tourism on the Aboriginal community located in Uluru National Park that was the subject of a major Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service sponsored study undertaken between 1985 and 1987. High tourist visitation to Uluru has a potentially negative environmental impact, which can also impinge on the value and belief systems of Aboriginal members of the community. Tourist trespass onto sacred sites may negatively impact on religious beliefs. High tourist visitation may also influence the willingness, or ability, of community members to hunt and gather, with associated economic and cultural impacts. Negative social impacts that might be associated with high visitation might also affect traditional authority structures, gender relations and intergenerational relations. Of particular significance is that the financial returns from tourism to the Aboriginal community might be so low, or inequitably bestowed, that they might undermine any incentive to participate in tourism: cultural costs might outweigh economic benefits.

Aboriginal communities can be aware of such issues and it is not unusual to find a diversity of community opinions, and associated politicking, about the potential negative and positive impacts of tourism. In general, there is limited wholesale acceptance of the tourism option, even in situations like Uluru National Park, where tourist visitation cannot be restricted even if it can be controlled. A key tension for many Aboriginal individuals and groups contemplating involvement in the industry is an acute sensitivity to being objectified, yet this is precisely what many tourists seeking an authentic experience wish to do. The problems of tailoring an authentic product to the tourist market are huge, especially given the heterogeneity and complexities of Aboriginality in the 1990s.

Sustainability

The concept of ecological sustainability has been applied to the tourism industry by the Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Party (Throsby 1991). Two points can be made at the outset. First, while there are common society-wide concerns about a range of sustainability issues, the limited evidence about actual Aboriginal participation in tourism suggests that questions about the commercial sustainability of Aboriginal tourism enterprises need to be addressed. Second, it is possible that the trade-offs for Aboriginal people, at individual, group or community levels, between commercial considerations on the one hand and environmental and cultural considerations on the other, are more closely related and acute than for other industry interest groups.

One of the fundamental paradoxes that Aboriginal people seeking involvement in tourism face is that while they might have a distinct comparative advantage in the provision of elements of Aboriginal cultures to tourists, this advantage can only be converted to economic benefit by long-term commitment to the industry and complex interactive processes. The option of establishing small Aboriginal businesses to market tourism is fraught with difficulties, many of which have been outlined elsewhere (Altman 1988). To summarise briefly, most Aboriginal people have had limited management or business experience; capital is especially scarce owing to relatively high poverty and welfare dependence; individuals often face significant educational and cultural hurdles in attempts to establish ventures or even in communicating with visitors; the reliance on government financial assistance often results in the establishment of enterprises with corporate structures that stifle initiative and undermine incentives to perform; and the nature of Aboriginal community politics may mean significant opposition to enterprises from sections of participating communities or groups.[7] Marketing complexities and the long lead times needed to achieve financial viability for small business in general, and small-scale tourism operations in particular, are experienced acutely by Aboriginal operators. Given such actual and potential hurdles, the apparent deficient supply of Aboriginal-operated tourism enterprises is understandable. Some individuals and groups may have made a judgement about the negative potential impacts of tourism and the difficulties of operating such ventures and have chosen to avoid the high risk of failure. Of greater concern is the fact that others do not have sufficient information of a prevocational nature to make informed decisions.

Despite such hurdles there are some successes and these examples provide important models. Finlayson (1991, 1992) has provided a detailed commentary on the Tjapukai Dance Theatre in Kuranda which is commercially successful. Some key elements of Tjapukai's success are its operation as a joint venture between Aboriginal artists and non-

Aboriginal management; its private sector financing; and the ability of the venture to accurately assess visitor expectations and tailor an entertaining product to meet these expectations. Professionalism is a key ingredient in the venture's success. Other enterprises, especially in the NT, have followed a similar formula, but have been less commercially successful because of lower standards and less effective marketing. In some cases, enterprises have been structured to ensure environmental and cultural sustainability, but this has precluded the possibility of financial viability. In such situations, participation in tourism may provide Aboriginal people with income supplements rather than economic independence. It is certainly the case that Aboriginal cultural tours that seek to provide tourists with a degree of 'authenticity' face major trade-offs between commercial, cultural, social and environmental variables. Enterprises that provide cultural tours can usually only accommodate small numbers for limited periods and the need to competitively price tours makes overall commercial viability impossible.

Policy considerations

Policy rhetoric that advocates expanded Aboriginal participation in tourism has intuitive appeal. As the tourism industry is expanding, and as Aboriginal cultures can be marketed as a unique component of the Australian experience, it is not unreasonable for government policy to seek to ensure a share of industry returns for Aboriginal interests. However, the potential for a rapid growth of Aboriginal participation in tourism is replete with complications that require careful consideration. Five broad policy issues are raised:

First, there is the need to clarify Aboriginal perceptions about, and aspirations for, involvement in the tourism industry. There are already indications that in many situations Aboriginal people have a preference for indirect, rather than direct, industry participation. There are also indications that Aboriginal aspirations differ markedly from situations where tourism access can be restricted, that is, where tourism is invited, to situations where tourism cannot be limited and is imposed. In the former case, Aboriginal involvement may be motivated by a desire for economic returns, whereas in the latter it might be motivated by a desire to control tourism and its impacts. In some situations both types of involvement might occur symbiotically; in others they might be inversely related (see Altman 1989b). Consequently, it is essential that in each situation Aboriginal perceptions and aspirations about specific proposals are carefully evaluated.

Second, there is an urgent need for a database on Aboriginal involvement in the industry Australia-wide. A database could collect a variety of

information on existing ventures that will allow analysis of those that are successful. Such a database must also seek to collect information on the longevity of enterprises, especially given the long lead times in the international marketing of tours. The development of such a database is the central initial element of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy. It is an essential requirement for any government marketing assistance. A spin-off would be the provision of information of a prevocational nature that could be provided to individuals and groups contemplating industry involvement.

Third, there is a perception at the federal government level of an inter-relationship between Aboriginal economic policy goals, embodied in the AEDP, and more general tourism development goals. In many situations, especially in remote regions, tourism appears to provide the only potential option for private sector employment and income generation. This makes the industry an attractive target for policy initiatives and may provide an incentive for Aboriginal people to seek industry participation. However, there is no guarantee that such a Hobson's choice results in either tourist demand or the provision of a marketable product. Policy realism suggests that in the immediate future a great deal of Aboriginal involvement in tourism will occur via the sale of arts and crafts; it will be indirect, part-time or occasional, and will only supplement existing sources of income.

Fourth, the role of government in creating the demand for, and supply of, Aboriginal cultural tourism needs clarification. A key role that government can play in facilitating Aboriginal industry involvement is to realistically inform Aboriginal people about the exacting nature of tourists' demands in all their diversity. Government could also facilitate access to ancillary management services for Aboriginal entrepreneurs. Both these roles could be more effectively fulfilled by State and Territory tourism agencies. Education and training looms large in current employment policy initiatives, but it is imperative that a high quality, well-trialled service is available before Aboriginal tours are exposed to paying, and often very demanding, clients. It is important that Aboriginal industry participants recognise the demands associated with operating tourism ventures that are both commercial and highly competitive. Government must be realistic about the significant additional constraints, problems and complexities that need to be addressed in establishing Aboriginal enterprises.

Finally, there is the complex issue of authenticity. The heterogeneity of Aboriginal societies today is rarely well understood by Australians, let alone overseas visitors. It remains unclear how elements of Aboriginal culture that are desired by visitors can be appropriately packaged for tourist consumption, without undermining the very culture that is

generating them. There is a need for market research to gauge what tourists want, and to gauge their reactions to what they receive. An attempt could then be made to assess how such demand matches available supply.

The future

Recent forecasts by the DOT (1992) indicate sustained growth in the tourism industry in Australia over the next decade. Policy-makers have simultaneously identified potential for an expanded Aboriginal involvement in the industry, primarily in the provision of unique Aboriginal cultural tourism. The vehicle that aims to facilitate this involvement is the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy that is currently being jointly developed by ATSIC and DOT. Given the complexities inherent in Aboriginal industry participation, the first phase in the development of the strategy is appropriately cautious, aiming initially to collect information on the extent and diversity of Aboriginal involvement in the industry. There is little doubt that future industry participation will benefit from such a coordinated and centralised data collection approach.

This paper has canvassed a range of issues that highlight the complexities and realities that will need to be addressed if effective Aboriginal industry participation is to occur. These include the need for more information concerning both the demand for, and supply of, Aboriginal cultural tourism and a range of impact, sustainability and policy issues that require both recognition and resolution. Despite these complications, there are examples of successful Aboriginal tourism ventures. These 'best practice' models have common features that can inform future developments. Commercial viability is a major hurdle for many Aboriginal enterprises and joint ventures with non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs or considerable management support will be an initial requirement. Similarly, it is important to tailor the tourism product to the appropriate market segment: cultural tourism will often need to be provided as professional entertainment for the mass market. Potential exists for marketing authentic experiences, but the market here is specialised and limited, especially on the supply side where there is a low capacity to absorb visitors in situations where such a product can be provided. The extent of indirect Aboriginal involvement in the industry, particularly through the sale of arts and crafts, is frequently underestimated, but has great potential. This option must be fostered and supported, by coordination of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy with ATSIC's Aboriginal Arts Industry Strategy.

I end, like many others, on a cautionary note. To be effective, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Strategy will need to be policy realistic. An important element of such realism, as demonstrated by the NT experience, is that the varied options for Aboriginal industry participation will need to be carefully considered, rigorously evaluated and slowly nurtured; tourism will not provide an instant panacea for Aboriginal economic disadvantage. Effective safeguards will be needed to ensure that negative environmental, social and cultural impacts are minimised. This suggests that industry participation will only occur in the medium- to longer-term, after appropriate product development, testing and marketing. Such a gradual approach might prove politically unpopular, both with Aboriginal interests and policy-makers, but it is essential if sustainable Aboriginal involvement in tourism is to occur.

Notes

1. The terms 'Aborigines' and 'Aboriginal' should be read throughout as inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders.

2. 'Blueprint for Tourism Industry Growth', News Release, Minister for Tourism, Alan Griffith, MP, 5 June 1992 and 'Arts, Pastoral and Tourism Industries Targeted for Development', Media Release, the Hon Robert Tickner MP, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 24 June 1992.

3. These include the Report of the Committee of Review of the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry (Altman 1989a), the National Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Commonwealth of Australia 1991), the report on Cultural Tourism in Australia (Brokensha and Guldberg 1992), the Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups Final Report on Tourism (Throsby 1991) and the Review of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission (Kennedy 1992). Unlike recent macro-policy focuses that oversimplify a complex issue, all these reports emphasise the hurdles that Aboriginal interests face if they are to participate fully in the industry.

4. Another report prepared by the NTTC (Wood 1991) focuses on interstate visitors and their interest in Aboriginal culture. For example, of 329 respondents in the Recent Visitor Attitudinal Survey only 2 per cent (5 respondents) chose the NT over other holiday destinations because of a stated interest in Aboriginal culture.

5. Recent census-based analysis on occupational segregation by Taylor (1992) provides no evidence of significant Aboriginal involvement in the provision of goods and services to the tourism industry.

6. Major recent published reports include those referred to in footnote 3 as well as Altman (1988), Finlayson (1991, 1992), Central Land Council et al. (1991), Burchett (1992a, 1992b) and Altman and Finlayson (1992).

7. In several Aboriginal tourism ventures in the NT, the ambivalence, and occasional hostility of sections of the community to tourist intrusion is very apparent. Visitors who are sensitive to issues of tourism and indigenous peoples may be acutely embarrassed by such community divisions.

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